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Enfin, l'ouvrage est accompagné de photographies, d'une table chronologique et de 24 cartes et croquis. Les cartes et croquis illustrent assez bien plusieurs des problématiques soulevées par l'auteur. Par contre, l'absence d'un système de renvoi à ces documents, situés à la fin du livre, peut rendre laborieuse la lecture à ceux qui n'ont pas une bonne connaissance de la géographie de l'Éthiopie.

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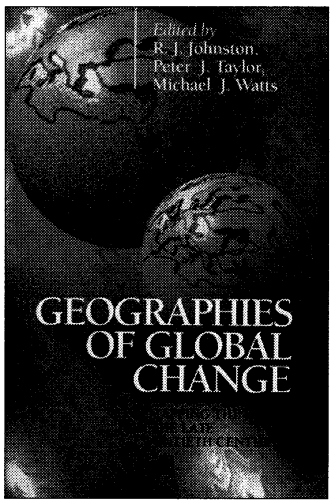

The stated purpose of this book is to engage the process of globalization from a geographical perspective. Such an engagement takes place in twenty short articles broken into five major areas: economy, politics, society, culture and environment.

The editors set up a dualistic model of the world, divided between a 'world of comfort' where western consumers reside, unaware of the mass of people in a 'world of struggle'. Yet these worlds are interwoven in complicated geographies as the two penetrate each other's space in ever increasing and unequal ways. This is a promising beginning. And at first glance, the book appears to address the spatial inter-connections of the two unequal and contrasting worlds, populated by real people, infused with their daily struggles. Yet the editors' introduction begs the question: how are the two worlds connected? What global processes connect comfort with struggle, and how does the local level affect, and become influenced by, global processes? The book claims (in its concluding chapter) to have dealt with the inter-connections between the local and global but in fact, rather than editorial fancy, there is a theoretical void exactly at the points that need to be 'mapped out' and explained.

The editors attempt to establish a philosophical position from which to explore globalization by adopting a materialist perspective in which the "geo-economic has a crucial role in creating globalization". Yet the editors quickly add that they do see this as the traditional Marxian 'economic base' formulation. Instead they argue, accurately enough, that their focus is more eclectic, integrating the economic with the cultural and other main areas of change. The analysis is not economic determinist or reductionist but one of 'becoming and being'. Instead of economic base, the editors use the metaphor of globalization as a 'great vortex' sucking up and mixing the economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental activities

which create multiple geographies. The book is said to unravel this global vortex. But it is easier to claim that vortexes can be unravelled than to do it — vortexes suck in their theoretical creators! Particular difficulties arise when neither globalization nor vortex are defined: in other words, what are the complex structures and processes mixed in the vortex? Ambiguity and metaphysics abound in the notion of a purposeful mixing of what remain material activities. From this critique of the editors' 'Hegelian vortextualism', come more criticisms of the themes of the book.

The editors' dismissal of the Marxian economic argument is compounded by a weak opening section on geo-economic change. The economic section is loosely defined and so lacking in theory that it cannot adequately explain a complex global economy let alone one interacting with the local. There are no explanations of global restructuring, Fordism, or post-Fordism in the economic section. Instead, Nigel Thrift (p. 34) makes postmodern claims of fragmentation and discontinuity, concluding that: "We will never reach a totally connected world" and argues that one cannot "assume that there is a place, like a satellite, from which it is possible to get an overview of the world" (Thrift, p. 34). This is a strange position indeed. If we can never understand global inter-connections, we social scientists can only adopt a postmodern politics of nihilism. Let us not even try to understand the connection between the 'world of comfort' and 'world of struggle'. Meanwhile the peoples' struggle goes on in a world far from Thrift's elite position in the heart of the 'world of comfort'.

Instead of economy, the book adopts a focus on institutions. What kind of institutions? There is an over-abundance of organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, National Governments, Multinational Corporations in this book, yet little emphasis on unions, social movements or consumer organizations. The book adopts a meso-scale of analysis (institutions and their powers) which often fails to connect with the micro or macro (global) levels. Yet institutions like multinationals or the World Bank do not operate in a vacuum nor in isolation. In the real world there are economic imperatives to which institutional actors respond, which constraint and propel them into action or reaction. Yet any kind of structural analysis is missing here. From the wreckage of structural thinking emerges an 'economic analysis' of institutional fragments.

It must be said that the non-economic sections of the book are its most integrated and coherent parts. In the political, cultural and environmental sections there are informative discussions of the linkages between power, modes of regulation, and regimes of accumulation, with interesting examples of how regulation theory can be used to understand certain effects of global capitalism. The political and cultural sections offer some insight on the processes, structures and agents of the changing political and cultural world, especially contributing to a greater understanding of the unequal power relations which exist between the 'world of comfort' and the 'world of struggle' through western domination of discourse and signs.

In the end however this book work cannot connect the 'world of comfort' with the 'world of struggle' because it does not have a theoretical structure adequate to the task. What is comfort as we know it? Comfort takes the form of Marx's "immense collection of commodities"; that is comfort in advanced capitalism is consumption without regard for its effects on nature and producers. And what is struggle? Struggle takes many forms but surely it must basically consist in the workers'

struggle to survive on what capital reluctantly gives to the people who produce its commodities and wealth, the people who produce capital itself. So what, therefore, must be the connection between the world of comfort (consumption) and the world of struggle (production) in a global system devoted to the commodity? It must be, has to be, the movement of commodities over space, that is it must (in one main form of analysis) be a commodity chain analysis. As the editors say, the world of struggle is hidden from the world of comfort (that is why it is comfortable!) But by following the path of a commodity from its comfortable image to its various processing, marketing, distribution nodes, back to points of production, and even beyond to the real worlds where workers are reproduced, we are forced to encounter a series of linked 'worlds of struggle'. 'We' consumers come face to face with the actual producers and their material conditions, we confront the consequences of our comfort in terms of the struggles of workers merely to survive.

A materialist deconstruction of the sign of the commodity, decoding images and connecting them to the contrasting, material reality of producers, reconstructs knowledge about the real connections formed every day between comfort and struggle. These linkages, materialized as commodity chains, are parts of an entire system of socio-spatial relations: as Massey (1993, p. 155) puts it "we need to conceptualize space as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global". This geographical pursuit of the commodity, from its consumption to the conditions of its production, entails a vision of a politics of space in which understanding 'others' is cast in terms of how we interact with them on a daily basis. The effects of the act of consumption travel through space, interacting with the conditions of production in other localities and for other people. As Harvey (1993, p. 56) argues "unmediated face to face" relations between consumers and producers are just as important as local face to face meetings: "It is just as important for a politically responsible person to know about and respond politically to all those people who daily put breakfast upon our table, even though market exchanges hides from us the conditions of life of the producers". Hence, a commodity chain analysis can weave together material and signified realities, separated by space and markets, providing a better interpretation of the connection between the world of comfort and the world of struggle. It is exactly the lack of conceptions such as this which leave this book as an uncoordinated assemblage of almost miscellaneous fragments having something, or various somethings, to do with globalization. One more opportunity missed for geography to produce a coherent theorization, backed by linked case examples, and concluding in a politics of transformation. For is not the purpose of academia, teaching and writing to understand the world in order to change it?

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